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THE IMMEDIATE CAUSE
OF
THE INDIAN MUTINY,
AS SET FORTH IN THE
OFFICIAL CORRESPONDENCE.

BY GEO. CRAWSHAY, ESQ.

MAYOR OF GATESHEAD.

A LECTURE DELIVERED AT THE MECHANICS' INSTITUTION, GATESHEAD, ON
WEDNESDAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 4TH, 1857.

“Lord Canning has shown throughout the greatest courage, the greatest ability, and the greatest resources.”—*Lord Palmerston at the Mansion House, November 8th.*

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“In general the English have paid very great attention to the jurisprudence and civil legislation of India, as the fundamental principle of their Indian government is to rule that country according to its own laws, customs, and privileges ; while, on the contrary, the other European powers that once had obtained a firm footing in India, formed alliances with, and attached themselves by preference to, the Mahometan sovereigns of the country. By this simple but enlightened principle in their Indian policy and administration, the English have obtained the ascendancy over all their rivals or opponents, and have become complete masters of the whole of this splendid region.”—FREDERICK VON SCHLEGEL. *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, 1828.

LECTURE.

Mr. B. J. Prockter having been called to the chair, introduced the lecturer in a brief address, in the course of which he said that they could not but respect the Mayor for the trouble he took in obtaining and giving information on matters of public importance, and the interest he took in the affairs of this rising country.

The Mayor of Gateshead then came forward amidst applause, and spoke as follows :—

Ladies and gentlemen, my friend, Mr. Prockter, has been kind enough to say, in his opening speech, that he gave me credit for taking an interest in the affairs of this rising country. I am afraid that the interest which I take arises from the painful feeling that possibly this is a falling country, and falling because of the inattention paid by the people to that which most concerns them. The mutiny of the Bengal army is undoubtedly a great danger in itself; but, in my opinion, it is a less danger than that arising from the ignorance of the people of England as to its causes. I have, consequently made it my duty to inquire into those causes, and my object to night is to explain what they are. I have found no difficulty whatever in ascertaining them. I have only had to make reference to certain official documents which were laid before the House of Commons in the July of this year; and I found, upon reading these, that the information contained in them is so clear, that I hold it to be impossible for two men to look one another in the face, after reading those documents, and so much as express a doubt as to what has been the cause of these dreadful disasters in India. You have heard probably something—in fact the truth has begun to be stated in various directions—about greased cartridges. What I shall state to you to night will show that, whatever other causes of disaffection, and there are many, whatever

other grievances, there may be in India, there are no sound reasons for the belief that this mutiny ever would have occurred, unless there had existed in the mind of the Hindoo a panic or belief that his religion was to be interfered with, and that this was to be done by means of the greased cartridge. That you may understand the full bearings of the case, it is necessary, before I commence an examination of the official documents, that I should say a few words as to the nature of *caste*, and what is meant by losing caste in India. This is indeed the more necessary, as it is often spoken of at the present time in the most flippant and careless manner. It is gravely alleged, as a chief fault of the East India Company, that they have made it a rule of government to respect the religion of the Hindoos ; and people talk of abolishing caste, and putting an end to this, as if it were the simplest matter in the world ! Now, the fact is, that, in the first instance, I must rectify an impression prevailing generally as to what caste means. We in England talk of caste, and talk of losing it ; but that is a misuse of words by which we are misled as to what losing caste means when applied to India. When we use the expression losing caste in England, we only mean that a man falls from a higher station to a lower ; consequently, having this meaning in our heads when we apply the phrase to the country whence we got it, we very commonly imagine that it means nothing more serious there. The fact is that caste is not even a Hindoo word, but a Portugese word signifying race, and the expression losing caste in India is hardly a proper one for what really takes place when these words are used. Losing caste in India is equivalent to excommunication in a Roman Catholic country, or rather to what excommunication was in the old days of the Roman Catholic Church, when of course it carried with it the penalties of contempt and persecution in this world, and damnation in the next. The division into castes is not confined to India, but existed among many other ancient nations ; and a Hindoo, when he commits an act by which he loses his caste, does not fall from a higher caste to a lower,—he does not, for example, from a Brahmin, become a Sudra ; but, should any of the four castes commit any of the specified acts by which they lose caste they are shut out from all fellowship with any Hindoo. A man who loses his caste loses his home ; and his family or friends cannot speak or sit with him. He becomes a most miserable being

during his life on this earth, and in his own belief he is condemned to perdition in the next. And this dreadful penalty falls upon the Hindoo only in consequence of a few offences which may be considered equivalent to the mortal sins of the Roman Catholic Church. Many offences may be committed not entailing this penalty ; but there are a few for which no forgiveness can be hoped. Of these some are moral, and some ceremonial observances. In this respect the Hindoos are like the Jews of old. There are some few observances of a ceremonial character, the violation of which stands upon the same level in the minds of the people as moral sins. Amongst these the most prominent are the prohibitions as to food. The eating of anything unclean is defilement. The cow is the sacred animal of the Hindoos,—the pig is alike unclean to Hindoos and Mussulmen. Consequently, a cartridge, greased or believed to be greased with the fat of cows and pigs, strikes at both, and for the Hindoo to put the cartridge to his lips is to commit one of the mortal sins : any Hindoo will rather suffer death than submit to it; and the order to bite this cartridge is one which could no more be obeyed by a Hindoo than could be an order to a Roman Catholic regiment to feed their horses with the holy wafer. Now, as I am here for the purpose of laying before you evidence, I will not allow this to rest upon my sole testimony. I will put in some evidence as to the truth of what I have told you, because, in point of fact, the whole thing hinges upon this. Col. Sykes, the first witness whom I shall call, was the Chairman of the East India Company till last year. He has spent the greatest part of his life in India ; and I suppose there is no authority higher than his. In a letter to the *Times*, dated October 8th, Colonel Sykes, after showing by evidence that the Sepoys are willing to make many concessions, that there are many things they will do which are not strictly in accordance with their religion, that there are points that they will concede, proceeds to show that there are points which they cannot concede, and to attempt to exact which will always bring about such results as we have seen. He states :—

“After the perusal of the above memorandum it will very naturally be asked what more could be desired or expected from native soldiers, and what possible cause or causes can there be to drive such men into mutiny—into the vengeful massacre of their European officers—into an utter recklessness with respect to their immediate and future personal interests, involving the loss of employment and the loss of provision in old age, of their liberal pensions from Government

—and into exposing themselves to the risk of a direful retributive vengeance. There must, then, be some fatal, imperative, and irresistible obligation to produce such results. Sir, any one but a sciolist in the knowledge of Asiatic beliefs, customs, and usages replies that external bodily defilement is removed by ablutions and oblations, but that a breach of certain alimentary laws *ipso facto* consigns the offender to excommunication and degradation, than which death is preferable, for his parents, his brothers, and his friends can neither eat nor smoke with him, nor let him drink out of their water vessels. He is become an out-caste. He is condemned to contempt in this world, and his soul is damned in the next. Now, it is very lamentable that in this age of reason such stern obligations should be accepted by human beings and be operative ; but they exist,—there they are as great facts. So it is lamentable that hostile religions should exist ; but there they are, and always have been—great facts which produced the conflicts of the Homoousians and the Homoiousians in our early church, Bartholomew's Eve, De Montford's bloody doings at Carcassone, Anabaptist atrocities at Munster, our Smithfield fires, Irish massacres, and even in these days threatened bloodshed at Belfast. Nor are alimentary laws of modern origin. We find that the Egyptians could not eat with the sons of Jacob because "that was an abomination to the Egyptians ;" the Jews equally were debarred by their usages from eating with the Gentiles, as is attested by St. Peter's vision of the sheet full of animals and the command, "Rise, kill and eat," and St. Peter's reply of "Not so, Lord, for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean." Acts x, 11—15, and at verse 28, St. Peter adds, "Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company or come unto one of another nation." With such precedents in our own Sacred Volume we can the more readily understand the food obligations of the Hindoos, which, however, have, no doubt, increased in stringency with the growth of Brahminical influence since the Christian era."

Here I must pause to bear out Colonel Sykes. If you read the Bible you will find that, in the case of the animals taken in the ark by Noah, there was a distinction made between clean and unclean ; that in Deuteronomy, speaking of animals, some are mentioned as to be eaten, and others as not to be eaten ; and that, in the case of the new converts to Christianity, as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, they were commanded to refrain from partaking of things strangled and from blood.

Col. Sykes says further :—

"But, whether more or less stringent, if we take the Hindoos as our servants, subject to their religious obligations, as just and humane masters we are bound to respect these obligations. The Mahomedans, also, are equally subject to a food interdict, in the case of swine's flesh ; and Brigadier John Jacob knows full well that if he were to order his Mahomedan soldiery (though they may venerate him) to bite a cartridge greased with pig's fat, or his high-caste troopers to bite a cartridge greased with cow's fat, that both the one and the other would promptly refuse obedience, and, *in case he endeavoured to enforce it they would shoot him down.*"

These are the words of Colonel Sykes :—

“Let us suppose such an order to have been given at Meerut, or anywhere else, to native troops, and the consequences were inevitable. Missionary labours would have had nothing to do with producing the bloody results ; though Christianity itself had not existed they would have followed, and a Buddhist, a Pagan, or any other authority would equally have been resisted to the death. Irrational and absurd as these caste obligations are, even felons in the gaols die to maintain them, and their active resistance to the recently introduced messing system in the gaols of Bengal and the North West Provinces has occasioned bloodshed. We have read in a recent Madras newspaper that some convicts who were embarked for transportation to the eastward refused the ship’s food given to them, and, as they were dying of starvation, it became necessary to disembark them. How are we to deal with such tenacious obduracy ? We cannot kill the fanatics, and we can only, therefore, lament the fanaticism and tolerate it. It is little known or thought of in the western world to what privations and sufferings the high-caste Sepoy is subjected in embarking for foreign service. From the moment he sets foot on board a ship he cannot cook ; he cannot receive the ship’s provisions, and his support is confined to parched grain and condiments which he takes with him. In the great expeditions to Java, China, and the Persian Gulf these privations and sufferings were borne cheerfully by thousands of Sepoys in our service, and would be borne again and again if their religious prejudices were respected. In the present feeling of resentment which has been so justly roused by the bloody acts of the Bengal Sepoys, and the generally expressed want of confidence in the future loyalty of the Brahmin and Rajpoot, it is of vital importance, as we cannot do without a native army, that there should be a clear understanding, not only with respect to the constitution of that army, but that in its management we should have constantly in mind what services we can and what we cannot exact from them.”

How could you deal with such religious scruples ? We know that they were in existence in the time of Alexander the Great, who endeavoured to make the Hindoos break caste, but they would not. We know that they are much older than the days of Menu, and are, in fact, so old that nobody knows the origin of them. If you put four or five thousand years down for their antiquity in India, it may not be far from the mark ; and, when we consider that these observances are regarded as of the most stringent character, and are of such antiquity, it is easy to see that they must have become so fixed in the minds of the people as not to be easily removed. Nor is there any reason why they should be, since it does not hurt anybody else if a man wishes to abstain from certain kinds of food. This matter is so important that I must put in another piece of evidence respecting it, very briefly. There has been published a letter from a Highlander of the 78th Regiment, in India, which had been out one night burning villages. The story

he tells is very horrible, and I wish to enter to night into no details of atrocities either on one side or the other. I merely tell you that he went amongst the flames, and succeeded in rescuing a few poor people, who would otherwise have perished in them. He rescued a female, an old man, and a child or two. He then says :—

“I went in at the other end of the village and came across a woman about twenty-two years old. She was sitting over a man that, to all appearance, would not see the day out. She was wetting his lips with some sista. The fire was coming fast, and the others all round were in flames. Not far from this I saw four women. I ran up to them, and asked them to come and help the sick man and woman out, but they thought they had enough to do, and so they had, poor things ; but, to save the woman and the dying man, I drew my bayonet, and told them if they did not I would kill them. They came, carried them out, and laid them under a tree. I left them. To look on, any one would have said that the flames were in the clouds. When I went to the other side of the village there were about one hundred and forty women and about sixty children, all crying and lamenting what had been done. The old woman of that small family I took out *came, and I thought she would have kissed the ground I stood on.* I offered them some biscuit I had for my day’s rations ; but they would not take it ; *it would break their caste,* they said. The ‘assemble’ sounded, and back I went, with as many blessings as they could pour out on anything nearest their heart.”

These poor creatures, perishing outside the village, naked and faint, would not take the food offered to them because, they said, “it would break their caste,” This will give you some idea how strong these feelings are, and how very frightful it is to endeavour in any way to coerce this feeling in that country. What I mention may be new to some of you perhaps, but these things are not unknown to any man connected with India. The East India Company always understood this, and this has been the one thing by which they have been enabled to maintain their power. India never could have been acquired at all if it had not been a settled point that the feelings of the people regarding these matters were to be scrupulously respected. And this you will find has been acknowledged by the English Parliament, which has always laid it down that the Hindoo laws and customs were to be attended to with regard to inheritance. An act of Geo. III. laid this down. And, with regard to this special matter, the Indian articles of war provide that there should be no interference with the religious scruples of the Sepoys. I have not been able to obtain a copy of them ; but I find this in page 294 of the Blue Book, and I will give it you as the first extract. It states :—

“The Articles of War clearly state that any person acting against the religious feelings of any man in a regiment of the army is liable to the severest punishment.”—*Blue Book*, page 294.

Consequently, you see, it forms part of the contract with the Sepoy that his feelings in these matters shall be respected. I now, with these few observations, proceed to the narrative of what has occurred. But, before doing so, it is necessary you should bear in mind a few positions on the map which I shall mention. You will hear me mention Dum Dum and Barrackpore, which are close to Calcutta. I shall mention Berhampore, which is 100 miles up the Ganges from Calcutta. Six hundred miles up the Ganges is Lucknow, and 300 miles further up, or 900 miles from Calcutta, is Delhi, with Meerut only a few miles off. These are the places I shall mention, and I beg you to bear in mind how they are placed all in one line up the Ganges from Calcutta. It appears that, as early as January 22nd of this year, there was a wide suspicion about Dum Dum and Barrackpore, in the immediate neighbourhood of Calcutta, that the new cartridge made at the Calcutta arsenal for the Enfield rifle was greased with the fat of pigs and cows, done for the purpose of defiling the Hindoo, depriving him of his caste, and compelling him to be a Christian. The following is one of the evidences of this :—

“*Lieut. Wright to Ensign Smith, Adjutant, Rifle Depot, Dum Dum.*

“Dum Dum, January 22, 1857.

“SIR,—I have the honor to report for the information of Major Bontein, commanding the depot, that there appears to be a very unpleasant feeling existing among the native soldiers who are here for instruction, regarding the grease used in preparing the cartridges, some evil-disposed person having spread a report that it consists of a mixture of the fat of pigs and cows.

“2. The belief in this report has been strengthened by the behaviour of a classie attached to the magazine, who, I am told, asked a sepoy of the 2nd Grenadiers to supply him with water from his lota. The sepoy refused, observing, he was not aware of what caste the man was; the classie immediately rejoined, ‘*You will soon lose your caste, as ere long you will have to bite cartridges covered with the fat of pigs and cows,*’ or words to that effect.

“3. Some of the depot-men in conversing with me on the subject last night, said that the report had spread throughout India, and when they go to their homes their friends will refuse to eat with them. I assured them (believing it to be the case,) that the grease used is composed of mutton fat and wax, to which they replied, ‘It may be so, but our friends will not believe it: let us obtain the ingredients from the bazaar, and make it up ourselves; we shall then know what is used, and be able to assure our fellow-soldiers and others that there is nothing in it prohibited by our caste.’

“In conclusion, I most respectfully beg to represent that by adopting the measure suggested by the men, the possibility of any misunderstanding regarding the religious prejudices of the natives in general will be prevented.—I have, &c.,

“J. A. WRIGHT, Lieutenant and Brevet Captain,
70th Regiment, Native Infantry.”

[*Blue Book*, page 2.]

The question arises, was there any foundation for this suspicion? The *Blue Book* tells us there was, that the suspicions were right, and that the cartridges had been greased in this manner in the arsenal at Calcutta. Now, that is so important to the whole case that I must give you the evidence. Ladies and gentlemen, I must beg you to be patient with me to-night, because this is necessarily a long story. (*Applause.*) But I dare not make a statement which I do not support. This is in the course of a court martial connected with the mutiny in the earlier stages. Lieut. Curry, of the Ordnance, on the trial of Salikram Sing, March 23rd, is recalled and examined:—

“By the Prosecutor.—You stated in your evidence on Saturday, that before the 27th January, cartridges were issued to the Delhi magazine from the Arsenal already greased; what are the orders you have received on the composition of grease for the use of cartridges?—A. The grease was to be made of six parts of tallow and one of bees-wax.

“Q. Of what ought that tallow to consist of?—A. No inquiry is made as to the fat of what animal is used.

“Q. You do not yourself know what fat is used?—A. No, I don’t know.

“Q. Is it not the intention of Government that the tallow to be used in the preparation of grease, should be mutton or goat’s fat?—A. It is *now* the intention of Government that all grease used in any preparations in the magazine is to be made of goats’ and sheep fat only.”—*Blue Book*, page 223.

Consequently, you see, upon examination, the officers in the Ordnance Department at Calcutta were unable to deny the statement that these mixtures had been used. Evidence to the same fact is given as to the ammunition sent from London, and there are further passages to the same effect in the *Blue Books*. It will not be disputed that, in the first instance, there had been this fault committed of greasing the cartridges in this manner. The alarm existed on the 22nd of January, and caused such discontent amongst the Sepoys that already there had been some isolated cases of incendiarism. The Government made no admission as to the cartridges; on the contrary, we find this officer (Colonel Wright) telling them it was not true. He did not know any better at the time; but still the Government,

when they found it *had* been done, ought to have acknowledged the fault, and dismissed the officials who committed it. But not only was this not done; but Colonel Wheeler also told them the report was false; and even to the last no admission of error was ever made.

“Colonel Wheeler, commanding the 34th Native Infantry, assured them the rumour so industriously circulated was false, and the native officers and men said they were satisfied it was so. But one native officer respectfully asked if any orders had been received regarding the Enfield rifle cartridges.”—*Despatch of General Hearsey, Blue Book, page 9.*

What they did was to issue an order, which I will read to you :—

“*The Secretary to the Government of India to the Adjutant-General of the Army.*

(Telegraphic.)

“Calcutta, January 27, 1857.

“In order to remove the objection the Sepoys may raise to the grease used for the cartridges of the rifle-muskets, all cartridges are to be issued free from grease, and the Sepoys are to be allowed to apply, with their own hands, whatever mixture suited for the purpose they may prefer.

“You are requested to communicate to the parties concerned, and to inform the officer in charge of the Depot of Instruction at Meerut, where the cartridges are prepared.

[*Blue Book, page 5.*]

“R. J. H. BIRCH, Colonel.”

This was on January 27th; but, on January 28th, another order was issued which to a great extent abolished this one, and confined the operation of it to rifle practice. It is stated at the end :—

“This arrangement, however, is to be considered applicable only to the depots of rifle practice, the question of the state in which cartridges are to be issued under other circumstances, and especially for service in the field, being under the consideration of Government.”—*Blue Book, page 5.*

Now, you must see that what was applicable to one branch of the service was applicable to another, and the question was, ought such a danger to have been left to exist in any shape whatever? On the following day, the 29th, a telegraphic communication was received by the Adjutant-General of the army at Meerut from the Secretary to the Government at Calcutta, by which the order was altogether abolished so far as Meerut was concerned. The Secretary to the Government had received a message from the Adjutant-General in which he said his men had had no suspicions hitherto, but that the issuing of a new regulation might make them so; and he asked for fresh orders, in reply to which he was ordered that the “existing practice in greasing cartridges for rifles may be con-

“tinued.” * So that the point of the Sepoys satisfying themselves as to the mixture was put on one side. You must recollect that it was impossible to tell by the taste at any time what the substance was with which the cartridge was greased. Had it been so it would have been a very clear matter to deal with. But it was a matter of belief, a suspicion in their minds, that constituted the danger. They had been told by the Hindoos working in the arsenal at Calcutta, that the cartridges had been so greased, and the thing for the Government to do was to deal with their minds so as to remove the suspicion, and that is the way in which you must look at it. And here I must bring forward a piece of testimony of the greatest importance, a letter to the *Times* of Major-General Tucker, who was formerly in office in India. He actually says :—

“If the recommendation addressed by me, under the authority of the then Commander-in-Chief to the Government of India in 1853, had not been most culpably disregarded, the existing disaffection among the native troops would never have arisen—not, at least, as connected with the greasing of cartridges ; for in that year, when some rifle ammunition was sent out to India from this country, and certain experiments in connexion with it were ordered, occasion was taken in my office urgently to recommend to the Government, that “*in the greasing composition nothing should be used which could possibly offend the caste or religious prejudices of the natives !*” That recommendation was addressed under my signature as Adjutant-General to the Military Secretary of the Government ; it must obviously have been entirely disregarded.”

““ *The Adjutant-General of the Army, Meerut, to the Secretary to the Government of India.*

“(Telegraphic.)

“Received your message of yesterday. Greased rifle ammunition has been used some years by native troops, to whom Minie rifles were issued on the Peshawur frontier ; also by Rifle Companies (see paragraph 21, section 2, Military Regulations). Grease composed of mutton fat and wax. Will not your present instructions make the Sepoys suspicious about what hitherto they have not hesitated to handle ! Fresh orders are solicited in reply.”

““ *The Secretary to the Government of India to the Adjutant-General of the Army, Meerut.*

“(Telegraphic.)

“ Calcutta, January 29, 1857.

“In reply to your message of the 28th, the existing practice in greasing cartridges for rifles may be continued, if the materials are mutton fat and wax. Further orders will be given, and explanations will follow by post.”—*Blue Book*, page 13.

NOTE.—These clearly indicate that on January 30th the suspicion as to the cartridges had not reached Meerut.

Here was warning given in 1853 not to do this. He adds :—

“I do not presume to say with whom specifically the blame of this most culpable neglect may rest,—only investigation can settle that point ; but I conceive, that either the Military Secretary or the officer presiding in chief over the Ordnance Department in Calcutta is, one or both, the party implicated. As far as I can learn with accuracy at this distance, *the ferment existing arose, first, from the glaring error of greasing cartridges in the Calcutta arsenal, after the English receipt, with tallow ; and, secondly, in issuing to the native troops, similarly greased cartridges, sent out direct from England, but which ought, of course, only to have been issued to the European troops.* It appears truly wonderful that it should not have occurred to any of the authorities in Calcutta charged with the issuing of these cartridges, that tallow made of the fat of all kinds of animals, a filthy composition at the best, would seriously outrage the feelings and prejudices of all the native troops, whether Moslems or Hindoos. My humble opinion is, that the Government of India should have insisted on learning with whom rested the blame of the grave errors committed. And the facts of the case having been ascertained, a frank explanation should have been issued for the information of the native troops. By such a course the European officers would have been armed with a truthful and candid explanation ; whereas now, in fact, the officers themselves do not in general know exactly how or in what manner the greasing process originated.”

There could not be a more criminal thing than to expose both England and Hindostan to the danger likely to arise from such a matter. But no admission was made to the Hindoos that this had been done at all ; on the contrary, it was denied, though of course the Hindoos could ascertain very easily, through their comrades in the arsenal, that the denial was a lie, and that this had been done ; consequently, we find, in this stage, that suspicion was not removed, but strengthened, and that becomes more manifest as we go on, for though this order, for allowing the Sepoys to take their own grease, appears to have been set aside at Meerut, and other stations which the alarm had not *yet* reached, it was attempted to carry it out at Barrackpore, in the neighbourhood of Calcutta, but did not allay the suspicion, which soon found fresh food. On February 3rd the new cartridges were shown to the men, and they objected to the paper :—

“ Captain Boswell to the Major of Brigade.

“ Barrackpore, February 4, 1857.

“ SIR.—I have the honor to report that in obedience to instructions contained in a note of yesterday's date, from the Brigadier commanding the station to the address of officers commanding regiments at the station, I yesterday afternoon at a parade of the wing under my command, had fully explained to the men of the wing that the car-

tridges for the new rifles were to be made up exactly like the five produced on parade, and of the same paper as that sent with the cartridges, and that the Sepoys would dip the cartridges themselves in wax and oil before using them.

“I took the cartridges into the ranks, and showed them to the men (having one broken open); and upon my asking several of the men, here and there in the ranks, if they could see anything objectionable in them, and their reply, made in the most civil but soldier-like manner, was, that the paper was not the same as that used for the old cartridges, and that they thought there was something in it.

“I deem it my duty to report this circumstance for the information of the Brigadier Commanding, as I imagine there will be no difficulty in substituting the old cartridge-paper for that made use of in the construction of the new cartridges.—I have, &c.

“N. C. BOSWELL, Captain, Commanding Left Wing 2nd Grenadiers.”

[*Blue Book*, page 14.]

An inquiry was made on the 6th, the result of which was communicated on the 8th to the Government at Calcutta by Major-General Hearsey:—

“*Major-General Hearsey to the Deputy Adjutant-General of the Army.*

“Barrackpore, February 7, 1857.

“SIR.—With reference to my official letter to your address, dated the 24th ultimo, I have now the honor to forward, for submission to the Government, the proceedings of a special Court of Inquiry which has been assembled at Barrackpore, for the purpose of ascertaining from the evidence of a selected portion of the 2nd Native Grenadier Regiment the cause of their continued objection to the paper of which the new rifle cartridges are composed.

“2. A perusal of the several statements and opinions recorded in these proceedings clearly establishes, in my judgment, that a most unreasonable and unfounded suspicion has unfortunately taken possession of the minds of all the native officers and Sepoys at this station, that grease or fat is used in the composition of this cartridge paper; and this foolish idea is now so rooted in them, that it would, I am of opinion, be both idle and unwise even to attempt its removal.

“3. I would accordingly beg leave to recommend for the consideration of Government, the expediency (if practicable) of ordering this rifle ammunition to be made up of the same description of paper which has been hitherto employed in the magazines for the preparation of the common musket cartridge, by which means this groundless suspicion and objection could be at once disposed of.

“I have, &c.

“J. B. HEARSEY, Major-General, Commanding Presidency Division.”

[*Blue Book*, page 13.]

The paper was of a yellow colour, glazed, and had the appearance of being greased, and Major-General Hearsey, as a sensible officer, who did not wish to offend the soldier on a matter of no consequence, recommended a change of paper, with a view to remove suspicion. I cannot read all the evidence that was taken, but give some passages:—

“Byjonath Pandie, Sepoy, 5th Company, 2nd Grenadier Regiment, appears in Court, and voluntarily states as follows :—

“Q. Were you on parade on the evening of the 4th instant, when the new cartridges were shown to the men of the regiment?—A. I was.

“Q. Did you make any objection to the materials of which those cartridges were composed?—A. I felt some suspicion in regard to *the paper*, if it might not affect my caste.

“Q. What reason have you to suppose that there is anything in the paper which would injure your caste?—A. Because it is a new description of paper of which the cartridges are made up, and which I have not seen before.

“Q. Have you ever seen, or heard from any one, that the paper is composed of anything which is objectionable to your caste?—A. I heard a report that there was some fat in the paper; it was a *bazaar report*.

“Q. Are these the cartridges and paper which you examined on parade (the paper and cartridges shown to the witness)?—A. Yes.”

“Chaud Khan, Sepoy, 7th Company, 2nd Grenadier Regiment, voluntarily states as follows :—

“Q. Do you object to the paper of which the new cartridges were made, now lying before the Court; and if so, on what grounds?—A. I have no objection to the bullet powder; it is only the paper which I have doubts about, which appears to be tough, and on burning it it smells as if there was grease in it.

“Q. Were you present when a piece of the paper was burnt, and when?—A. On the evening of the 4th instant a piece of the cartridge paper was dipped in water and afterwards burnt. When burning it made a phizzing noise, and smelt as if there was grease in it.

“Q. Who were present when this burning of the paper took place?—A. Two or three were present. I do not recollect what their names are. [A piece of the cartridge paper is burnt in Court by the witness.]

“Q. Are you still of opinion that there is any smell of grease in it?—A. No; there is not.

“Q. Have you now any objection to use these cartridges with paper of that description?—A. I object to this paper being used, as every one is dissatisfied with it on account of it being glazed, shining like wax-cloth.”

“Jemadar Buddor Sing, 6th Company, 2nd Grenadier Regiment, is called into Court :—

“Q. Have you any objection to the new cartridge which lies before the Court?—A. Nothing except the paper, which I have *some suspicion about*, as I have never seen *anything of the kind before*; and the general report is that there is grease in it.”

“Jemadar Gunness Sing, No. 10 Company, 2nd Grenadier Regiment, being called into Court :—

“Q. Have you any objection to the cartridge which lies on the table?—A. I have no objection to the cartridge myself, but there is a report amongst the men that there is grease in it.

“Q. How did this report get abroad?—A. I do not know.

“Q. What, in your opinion, would be the best plan to undeceive the minds of the men on this point?—A. I know *no other way than to substitute other paper in its place*.”

“Jemadar Golaul Khan, 2nd Company, 2nd Grenadier Regiment, is called into Court :—

"Q. Have you any objection to the use of the cartridges now lying before you?—A. *I have objection to the paper, as there is a report got about that there is grease in it.*

"Q. Can you prove yourself that there is grease in it, or have you taken any measures to do so?—A. *There is grease in it, I feel assured, as it differs from the paper which has heretofore been always used for cartridges.*"

"Jemadar Ram Sing, 9th Company, 2nd Grenadier Regiment:—

"Q. Have you any objection to the use of the cartridges now lying before you?—A. A report got about, which, I think, came from the Magazine Classies in Calcutta, that there was some grease in the paper; on this account I have some suspicions about it.

"Q. How can this suspicion be removed from your mind?—A. I cannot remove it."

"Jemadar Wuzeer Khan, 7th Company, 2nd Grenadier Regiment, called into Court:—

"Q. Have you any objection to the use of the cartridges lying upon the table?—A. I have no objection to it—it appears to be new.

"Q. Would you have any objection to use it in the way the old cartridges are used?—A. I should have some objection, in consequence of the suspicion which exists generally in the cantonment."

"Havildar Major Ajoodiah Sing, 8th Company, 2nd Grenadier Regiment, called into Court:—

"Q. Have you any objection to the use of the cartridges lying on the table?—A. I have suspicions about the paper, on account of the bazaar report that there is grease in it."

"Have you taken any measures to prove whether this report is true?—A. I have tried it in oil, and also in water, and where it was wet with the oil it would not dissolve. After this trial I thought there was no grease in it.

"Q. By the experiment, in your opinion, there was no grease in the paper; would you object to *bite off* the end of the cartridge?—A. *I could not do it, as the other men would object to it.*"

"Bheekun Khan, Havildar, 10th Company, 2nd Grenadier Regiment, called into Court:—

"Q. Have you any objection to the use of the cartridges lying on the table?—A. I *suspect* that there is cow's and pig's grease in them, from a bazaar report.

"Q. If you had any doubt, why did you not ascertain the point from your officer?—A. I could not report it to the officer, it being merely a bazaar report.

"Q. When the paper and cartridge was shown you upon parade, had you any reason to suppose that there was any grease mixed with the paper?—A. I have *heard that it smells of grease* when it is burnt."—*Blue Book, pages 15 to 18.*

Well, the project of changing the paper was declared at Calcutta to be inconvenient, because the paper was thinner, and answered better; but, in the middle of the discussion, as to what should be done, Major-General Hearsey writes to them in a despatch of February 11th, that at Barrackpore "we are dwelling upon a mine ready for explosion," and complaining that he had received no answer to his recommendation of the 8th that the paper should be changed.

At last, a way is found out to meet the case completely, and certainly it is wonderful that it was not found out before. Lieutenant-Colonel Hogge, Director of the Military School of Instruction, writes from Meerut on the 21st Feb. making the very opportune suggestion that the biting of the cartridge should be altogether abolished. In the course of his despatch he says :—

“As Colonel Abbott states as an objection to the use of mutton fat, that it might be difficult to persuade the native soldiers that no other animal fat was used, I can only suggest that either the cartridges should be issued from magazines ungreased, and that the Quartermaster or officers commanding companies in native regiments should purchase the material themselves, through a joint agency of a Brahmin or a Mussulman, which would convince the other men that the fat used was not from either cow or pig, and further, that *instead of the end of the cartridge being bitten off as laid down in drill instructions, the men should be told to twist it off with the right hand, the cartridge being shifted to the left hand for this purpose, whilst the rifle is supported against the body by the left wrist : this latter plan would remove all objections from that class of Hindoos who never touch animal food.*”

On March 5th, the biting of the cartridge is abolished. After I have told you this, you will wonder at suspicion still existing, but after I have told you a few more things you will not even wonder that it ended in mutiny. A thing to be noted is that the biting of the cartridge was a practice which had for many years been entirely useless. It was a practice necessary when the old flint and steel firelock was in use ; but already for many years past, ever since the substitution of the percussion musket for the old firelock, cartridge biting had been a superfluous thing altogether. Something very horrible is to come out now, but I will not state anything without giving you chapter and verse for it. You will see how the Indian Government acted. Major Bontein, at Dum Dum, on March 2nd, writes to the Government :—

“Permit me to quote the regulation as it now stands :—

“‘The firelock being at the word ‘prepare to load’ placed on the ground six inches in front of the body, and held at the full extent of the left arm, the recruit receives the order ‘load ;’ upon which the regulation says, first bring the cartridge to the mouth, holding it ‘between the forefinger and thumb, with the ball in the hand, and bite off the top elbow close to the body.’”

“The above regulation is at present in force, but I would submit that the practice of biting the cartridge is a mere remnant of the platoon exercise introduced in the days of the flint and steel firelock, when the musket being brought to the right side with the left hand for the purpose of priming it was almost impossible to use the cartridge without the aid of the teeth.”

He further says :—

“I would suggest that, at the third motion of the order ‘prepare to load,’ the left hand, instead of holding the musket at the full extent of the arm, should, after placing it on the ground in front of the body, slip up and seize the rifle at the brass band, or tip to the stock; it will then be in a position to meet the right hand, which conveys the cartridge from the pouch, to tear off the cartridge-paper in place of using the teeth, and (at the fourth motion of the word ‘load,’ when the right hand seizes the head of the ramrod) to return to the centre part of the stock, ready to throw up the firelock into the ‘capping position’ at the sixth command of the platoon exercise. The above suggestion I offer with every deference to the judgment of superior experience. *I do not, in the least, intend to consult the caprice of the native soldier; my motive is an increase of efficiency.*

Mark the concluding passage, that the substitution of tearing for biting the cartridge would be an increase of efficiency. *Major Bontein dared not offer his suggestion to Lord Canning on the ground of sparing the religious feelings of the Sepoys.* Of course the Government at Calcutta could not resist, when Lieut.-Colonel Hogge and Major Bontein gave them such sound advice; and they issued an order, to which, and the terms of it, I now turn. After reciting the new mode recommended, the order states:—

“This mode the Governor-General in Council is disposed to think will be an improvement, and should his Excellency concur, his Lordship in Council requests that early instructions may be given to the several depots of instructions, *not making any allusion whatever to the biting of the cartridge, but drawn up in such a way that they may appear to be independent of anything laid down in previous regulations.*

“The Governor-General in Council considers that it would be best to make the alteration before any objection is raised, and therefore requests his Excellency’s early attention to the subject.

“Instructions have been issued *confidentially* to the depot of instruction at Dum Dum, to defer the use of ammunition pending the reference to his Excellency.—I am, &c.

“R. J. H. BIRCH, Colonel.”

[*Blue Book*, page 35.]

Further on, Major-General Hearsey, writing on the same day, the 5th March, to the Government, on the same point, says :—

“The new mode of loading may be considered as a part of the intended drill for a new weapon about to be introduced into the service, and *not as a concession extorted by discontented men.*”

He adds :—

“*We shall thus be keeping our word with the Sepoys, and, at the same time, introducing a better plan of loading with reference to their religious scruples.*”

The fact is, that this order of the 5th of March, to which they were anxious not to give the appearance of concession, whereas they ought to have been anxious to remove danger by satisfying their minds,—this order of the 5th of March *was concealed from the Sepoys*. The consequences of this will be seen further on. The order was not published, and, as you will see further on, *it was not acted upon*. I have now gone, in point of date, beyond other events of very great consequence. On the 26th February (we have now got to March 5th) occurred the mutiny of the 19th Regiment at Berhampore, and it is upon the conduct of Government at this serious epoch that everything depended. The men at Berhampore were only 100 miles further up the Ganges, and the alarm which commenced at Barrackpore had spread there. I have explained to you that there had been an inquiry held which clearly showed that the Sepoys objected to cartridges of a certain paper and colour. Yet, you will see, a mutiny occurred at Berhampore, because of the conduct of the Government in not setting the minds of the Sepoys at rest in this matter. Here I must read you a document of some length, viz, the petition of the 19th Regiment for mercy, and I must tell you that the Governor-General admitted that they had stated the facts correctly. He says :—

“Upon the whole, the petition contains a fair account of what took place on the occasion of the outbreak, the main points being borne out by the evidence at the Court of Inquiry.”—*Minute of the Governor-General in Council of March 27th, page 50, Blue Book.*

With this endorsement of Lord Canning, I will read the petition of the Sepoys for mercy after what had occurred, to which I have referred :—

“Petition to the Major-General Commanding the Division, inclosed by Colonel Mitchell.

(Translation.)

“ March 2nd.

“Hitherto this regiment has been always obedient in every way, and marched and halted wherever ordered, without question of any sort. For the last two months or more it has been rumoured that new cartridges have been made in the magazine at Calcutta, on the paper of which bullock’s or pig’s fat was spread, and that it was the intention of Government to coerce the men to bite them. On this account we were very much afraid on the score of our religion. The Colonel on hearing this assembled the native officers, and told them that on the arrival of the new muskets he would make such arrangements as would satisfy them ; that is to say, that such grease as was necessary should be prepared before the Sepoys by the Pay Havildars of companies ; with this we were perfectly satisfied. After some time some fresh stores arrived from Calcutta, and on the 25th of this month

we received orders on the following day to fire fifteen rounds of blank cartridge per man ; at 4 o'clock in the afternoon the cartridges were received at the bells of arms and inspected by us ; we perceived them to be of two kinds, and one sort appeared to be different from that formerly served out. Hence we doubted whether these might not be the cartridges which had arrived from Calcutta, as we had made none ourselves, and were convinced that they were greased. On this account, and through religious scruples, we refused to take the caps."

Now, bear in mind, if the men had a design and wanted to fight *they would not have refused to take the caps.* Then it goes on :—

"At half past 7 o'clock, the Colonel, accompanied by the Adjutant, come upon parade, and very angrily gave orders to us, saying 'If you will not take the cartridges I will take you to Burmah, where through hardship you will all die. These cartridges are those left behind by the 7th Native Infantry, and I will serve them out to-morrow morning by the hands of the officers commanding companies.' He gave this order so angrily that we were convinced that the cartridges were greased, otherwise he would not have spoken so. The same night, about a quarter to 11, shouts of various kinds were heard, some said there's a fire, others that they were surrounded by Europeans, some said that the guns had arrived, others that the cavalry had appeared. In the midst of this row the alarm sounded on a drum, then from fear of our lives the greater number seized their arms from the khotes."

I should mention to you here that Colonel Mitchell had previously sent an order for horses and artillery to be there in the morning with a view of coercing the men, who were to be made to bite the cartridge, with the artillery and cavalry before them to cut them up if they did not obey. The men heard of this, and flew to arms. The narrative proceeds:—

"Between 12 and 1 o'clock the 11th Irregular Cavalry, and the guns with torches, arrived on the parade with the commanding officer, which still more confirmed our suspicions of the cartridges being greased, inasmuch as the commanding officer appeared to be about to carry his threat into execution by force. *We had been hearing of this sort of thing for the last two months or more, and here appeared to be the realization of it.* On this the Colonel called all the Native officers, and said to them very angrily, 'This is a very bad business ; we don't fear to die and will die here.' Then the Native officers, in the most respectful manner, represented to him, the Sepoys are fools, whereas you have sense and judgment ; do not at this time speak so angrily, for this is a matter affecting their religion, and that is no slight thing. Please to send the artillery and cavalry away. The Colonel agreed to this and sent each officer with his Native officer to his company to soothe and explain to the men. *The Sepoys represented that all men value their religion, and we believe we shall lose caste by biting the cartridges ;* and on seeing the artillery and cavalry we became more frightened ; the officers then said to the men, we will ask the Colonel to send away the cavalry and guns, which was accor-

dingly done. At the same time, however, the Colonel said I will have a general parade in the morning, then I will have the Governor-General's orders read out. On this the Native officers again represented to him that only a short portion of the night remained, and if he had the cavalry and guns there so soon again, the men would only believe that they were intended to act against them. It would be better if he only paraded the regiment alone; at first he would not agree to this, but on its again being represented to him by the Adjutant he agreed to it. The men then lodged their arms and went to their lines. They all appeared on parade on the following morning. On the 28th, again according to orders, there was another parade, at which the cartridges, which the men had refused to fire, were inspected, when assuredly two kinds of cartridges were found, one kind of white thin paper, and the other darker and thicker. On burning and submerging the two the difference still was evident, which did not remove the distrust. The Colonel put up specimens of each kind of paper and has sent them to you. From that time onwards all duties have been properly carried on, and so shall be; as long as we live we will faithfully obey all orders; wherever in the field of battle we are ordered to go, there shall we be found; therefore, with every respect, we now petition, that since this is a religious question from which arose our dread, and as religion is by the order of God the first thing, we petition, that as we have done formerly, we may be also allowed to make up our own cartridges, and we will obey whatever orders may be given to us, and we will ever pray for you.

"The petition of the Native Commissioned and Non-commissioned Officers and Sepoys of the 19th Native Infantry."—*Blue Book*, page 264.

There are one or two points warranting the suspicion of these men. The most important is that they had never at any time before had any cartridges except those made with their own hands. For the first time, in the midst of all these rumours about greased cartridges, they have cartridges handed to them of a different paper and colour, consequently they were seized with panic. Unfortunately, Colonel Mitchell threatens them in the most cruel manner, and the men, in terror of their religion and their lives, take up arms to defend themselves. But I must say that Colonel Mitchell did all in his power to undo the harm he had done. The same night he does appear to have tranquillized the men, sent away the guns and cavalry, the men laying down their arms, and abandoned—since he saw that they conscientiously objected to it—his purpose of insisting on their using the cartridges. In consequence order was restored, and had the matter been left to the Colonel the danger might have blown over. But, unfortunately, there was a Governor-General and Council at Calcutta; and, after hearing the whole case, the Governor-General decided that:—

"Mutiny so open and defiant cannot be excused by any sensitiveness of religion or caste, by fear of coercion, or by seductions and

deceptions of others. Accordingly, it has been resolved by the Governor-General in Council that the 19th Regiment shall be disbanded immediately.”—*Minute of March 27, Blue Book, page 51.*

Now, you see two facts before you, staring you in the face. At this critical period—the month of March—they had laid before them, at Calcutta, a recommendation of the utmost importance, that biting the cartridges should be dispensed with, and it could only have been a few days before they had this recommendation of Colonel Hogge that they heard of the outbreak at Berhampore, which could not have occurred if this practice had been previously abolished. Government could not refuse to abolish the biting of the cartridges; but you must see they could not make a proclamation, and let all the Sepoys know that they should not bite the cartridge any longer, and let this be read at the head of every regiment,—that, I say, they could not do, and at the same time disband the 19th Regiment. What they did do was to drop the biting secretly, and so as not to appear a concession, and then to disband—which is a most fearful punishment, the disbanded Sepoy being reduced to beggary and starvation—the 19th Regiment. The news of that spread all through India. The order disbanding them was read at the head of every regiment. The Sepoys heard nothing at all about the not-biting, but all of the biting of the cartridge, and consequently the panic spread that the Government was determined to make them, at all costs, bite the cartridges, or disband them, as it had done the 19th, if they refused to do it. (*Applause.*) The consequences of this soon began to appear; in fact the consequences anticipated the event. The 19th Regiment was ordered to be removed to Barrackpore, to be disbanded in the face of all the regiments that could be gathered from far and near. The object of Lord Canning was to strike terror by a terrible example. But, two days before the 19th got there, a mutiny of the 34th Regiment took place at Barrackpore, and that occurred because they knew the 19th was going to be disbanded. The 34th Regiment appears to have been that in which the whole thing began, under Lieutenant-Colonel Wheeler, who, in the most injudicious manner, was endeavouring to convert the men to Christianity. I do not say a commanding officer may not possibly preach Christianity to the Sepoys without doing harm, but, certainly, for a man in such a position, to do so without doing harm, must require extraordinary discretion and prudence. You may imagine the effect of a Pro-

testant Colonel constantly preaching up his own doctrines, and denouncing the Roman Catholic religion, upon a Roman Catholic regiment, and there can be no doubt that the preaching of Colonel Wheeler, which had gone on for months before the alarm about greased cartridges, had a great deal to do with preparing the minds of the Sepoys for mutiny. They did not understand it probably ; but, when the greased cartridges came, they imagined that this was the thing meant, and that it was by this means that they were to be converted and turned into Christians. The 34th Regiment was at Barrackpore two days before the disbandment of the 19th, when Mungul Pandey, a man hitherto of good character, appeared in a state of religious frenzy before the lines intoxicated with a drug, or bhang, which they take when going to do anything desperate, shooting at every one near till he was arrested. He was tried and hung, and, of course, there was nothing for it but to hang him ; but, at the same time, there could be no doubt that that man was in no plot, but that he was simply excited by his fanaticism, and probably but for the fear of the greased cartridges, he would never have been a murderer. On the occasion of his doing this, there was a general indisposition on the part of the men to arrest him, and the consequence was that another man was tried and hung for not arresting him, and an inquiry was ordered into the state of the regiment. The result was, an order condemning Colonel Wheeler for his conduct, and determining to disband that regiment too, or rather those companies of it which were at Barrackpore, for there were companies absent. This brings me forward to the end of April, when the order was given for the disbandment of the 34th. And now for one or two important matters to be mentioned in reference to this regiment. It has been said that the mutiny was the result of a Mahommedan conspiracy. I would reply that the Blue Book sets aside this altogether, *and that if it were the case* it would not alter the fact that the minds of the men were worked upon by means of these cartridges. The question for us to consider is what was the acting motive which drove the men to do what they did, and how far was the Government responsible for creating it? The Mahommedans may have made use of this feeling, but that does not affect the question. But it is exceedingly singular that the evidence of the Blue Books rather goes in a contrary direction, for all the officers of the 34th Regiment examined testify that they would trust the Sikhs and Mahommedans of the regiment, but they would not trust the Hindoos, and

the result of their evidence is thus summed up at the conclusion of the inquiry :—

“ April 17th.

“ The Court, upon the additional evidence before them, adhere to their former opinion, viz. :—

“ ‘ That the Sikhs and Mussulmans of the 34th Regiment Native Infantry are trustworthy soldiers of the State, but that the Hindoos generally of that corps are not trustworthy.’ ”

“ C. GRANT, Brigadier, President.

“ E. AMSINCK, Brevet Colonel, Member.

“ C. S. REID, Brevet Lieutenant-Colonel, Member.

“ H. W. MATTHEWS, Major, Member.

“ W. A. COOKE, Major, Member.

“ GEO. N. GREENE,, Captain,

Conducting the Proceedings.

“ J. B. HEARSEY, Major-General,

[*Blue Book*, page 148.]

Commanding Presidency Division.”

On May the 4th, Lord Canning issued a general order disbanding the 34th Regiment. Now I told you before that the order abolishing the biting of the cartridge had not been read to the regiments, but that the general order disbanding the 19th Regiment had been read at the head of every regiment. In the same way, Lord Canning directed that the order of May 4th disbanding the 34th should be read at the head of every regiment. But I cannot say that did any harm, because by the time it could have been read there were no regiments to read it to. On May 4th, the very date on which the 34th was ordered to be disbanded, and the order of disbandment ordered to be read to every regiment of the service, at that very date, a letter was written from Lucknow with the news of a mutiny there. All this time, ever since the disbandment of the 19th Regiment at the end of March, the disbanded Sepoys had been on the road, and by this time the panic as to the cartridges, which in January had been confined to the neighbourhood of Calcutta, had spread from one end to the other of the Bengal Presidency. At Lucknow on May 4th, the following most extraordinary despatch was written :—

“ *The Secretary to the Chief Commissioner of Oude to the Secretary to the Government of India.*

“ SIR,—I am directed to report, for the information of the Governor-General in Council, that on the 2nd instant the 7th Oude Regiment, stationed seven miles from the Lucknow Cantonments, *refused to bite the cartridge* when ordered by its own officers, and again by the Brigadier. It was ordered to parade on the 4th. On the 3rd several symptoms of disaffection appeared. At 4 p.m. the Brigadier reported it in a very mutinous state. Instantly a field battery, a wing of Her Majesty's 32nd, one of the 48th and 71st Native Infantry and

of the 7th Cavalry, the 2nd Oude Cavalry and 4th Oude Infantry, marched against it. The regiment was found perfectly quiet ; formed line from column at the order, and expressed contrition. But when the men saw guns drawn up against them, half their body broke and fled, throwing down their arms. The Cavalry pursued and brought up some of them. The arms were collected and brought away, and the Regulars were withdrawn. The disarmed 7th were directed to return to their lines, and recall the runaways. They were informed by Sir Henry Lawrence, that Government would be asked to disband the corps ; but that those found guiltless might be re-enlisted."

"I have, &c.,

"GEORGE COUPER."

[*Blue Book*, page 209.]

Was there not something horrible in this? You know that on the 5th March biting was ordered to be dispensed with, and you see two months after that, the regiment mutined on that very point. Can anything go beyond that? The men of Oude two months after the date of the order of March 5th are ordered to bite the cartridge, and upon that mutiny ensues. And now I must read the observations upon this point in the Council Chamber at Calcutta. Lord Canning says, in his Minute of May 10th :—

"This despatch from the Chief Commissioner in Oude reports the outbreak of a mutinous spirit in the 7th Regiment of Oude Irregular Infantry and their refusal to *use* the cartridge furnished to them."

Now that is not the fact, they refused to *bite* it ; but, Lord Canning, knowing that an error had been committed, seeks to mislead by using this word. He adds :—

"I see no reason in the tardy contrition of the regiment for hesitating to confirm the punishment of all who are guilty. I would, therefore, support the Chief Commissioner at once. I think it better, however, that the disbandment, to whatever length it may be carried, should be real."

In fact, all that Lord Canning finds fault with is, that the Chief Commissioner at Lucknow does not go far enough : all that he says is, that he wishes the Commissioner to be more severe ; but he observes at the end :—

"It appears that the revised instructions for the platoon exercise, by which the biting of the cartridge is dispensed with, had not come into operation at Lucknow, when the event took place. Explanation of this should be asked."—*Blue Book*, page 210.

But not one word is there in this book in answer. I presume Lord Canning never got it. Mr. Dorin, a member of the Council, next says :—

"The biting of the cartridge can only have been an excuse for mutiny, since I presume it is certain that no new rifles or greased cartridges have been served out to this local corps."

Major-General Low, another member of the Council, says :—

“I cannot say with much precision all that ought, in my opinion to be done by orders of the Government, especially as it appears to me, that probably the main body of this regiment, in refusing to bite the cartridges, did so refuse, not from any feeling of disloyalty or disaffection towards the Government or their officers, but from an unfeigned and sincere dread, owing to their belief in the late rumours about the construction of those cartridges, that the act of biting them would involve a serious injury to their caste and to their future respectability of character. *In short, that if they were to bite these cartridges they would be guilty of a heinous sin in a religious point of view.*”—*Blue Book*, page 211.

Therefore you see that Major-General Low, after admitting that probably the men refused to bite the cartridges because they would be guilty of a heinous sin in a religious point of view, yet would punish them for refusing ! What are you to do with such men as these ? We have further the minute of Mr. Grant, also a member of the Council, who says :—

“Also, I agree with my honourable colleague General Low in thinking it probable, that the main body of these men may have refused to bite the cartridges, not from any feeling of disaffection, but from an unfeigned dread of losing caste, engendered by the stories regarding cartridges, *which have been running like wildfire through the country lately.* Sepoys are, in many respects, very much like children, and acts, which on the part of European soldiers would be proof of the blackest disloyalty, may have a different significance, when done by these credulous and inconsiderate, but generally not ill-disposed, beings. These men, taken from the late Oude army, can have learned as yet little of the vigour of British discipline ; and although there can be no doubt that the cartridges, which they refused to bite were not the new cartridges, for the Enfield musket, which, *by reason of the very culpable conduct of the Ordnance Department, have caused all this excitement ;* yet it may be presumed, that they were the first cartridges that these men were ever required to bite in their lives. Also there is no saying what extreme mismanagement there may have been on the part of the Commandant and Officers in the origin of the affair ; *the mere fact of making cartridge-biting a point after it had been purposely dropped from the authorized system of drill, merely for rifle practice, is a presumption for any imaginable degree of perverse management.*”—*Blue Book*, page 212.

And Mr. Grant condemns the Sepoy to disbandment ! But events were hurrying rapidly to a crisis. At the same time that this was occurring in Oude, the same thing occurred at Meerut. It was not indeed stated in the Blue Book that the biting of the cartridge was attempted to be enforced there. But neither was it stated, which, of course, it would have been had it been possible, that the order abolishing biting had been carried into effect there, nor was

it likely that it was, considering that Meerut was 300 miles further from Calcutta than Lucknow. In the first instance, seventeen recruits at Meerut were dismissed the service for refusing to use the cartridge, and complaints were sent from head-quarters to Meerut that those men had not been, sufficiently punished :—

“Docket of a Letter dated May 6th, 1857, from the Adjutant-General of the Army to the Secretary to the Government of India.

“To prevent vague and exaggerated accounts of the mutinous conduct of some of the troops at Meerut, intimates that eighty-five out of the ninety men of the 3rd Light Cavalry armed with carbines having refused to receive the cartridges tendered to them, the Commander-in-Chief has ordered the trial of the whole of them by general court-martial, and a squad of artillery recruits (seventeen in number) having also refused they were at once summarily dismissed by the officer commanding the artillery at the station, a punishment which the Commander-in-Chief considers to be incommensurate to the offence, and his Excellency has caused the authorities concerned to be informed that the recruits should have been instantly placed in confinement in view to their trial by court-martial.”—Blue Book, page 175.

What happened in a few days? Ninety of the troops there were ordered to use the cartridge; 85 refused! They were tried by court martial, and condemned to imprisonment in irons for ten years.* (*Cries of “shame.”*)

* “I have (observes Col. Sykes) no hesitation in saying, from my personal knowledge of the classes of men constituting the Bengal army that a similar and equally sudden revolt might have occurred at any time in the last hundred years had the same dangerous religious chord been touched by rough and imprudent hands, as has been done recently, and this, too, although there had not been a missionary in India. It will be observed from the Parliamentary papers that the first uneasy feeling about the greased cartridges was manifested in January; regiments mutinied and were disbanded in March and April, and without indications of combined hostile feelings against their European officers; and it was not until the 10th of May at Meerut, after the 85 troopers had been condemned *en masse* to ten years’ imprisonment in irons, with hard labour, as felons, for refusing to use suspected cartridges, that the Sepoys, for the first time in a hundred years, in combination, lifted their hands in exasperation against their officers to massacre them. *The shock of the punishment was electric throughout 80,000 men; each Sepoy made the troopers’ case his own—it was resistance or supposed degradation, and, from that moment, a Bengal Sepoy was not to be trusted.* * * * I must protest against the doctrine that a Sepoy army is not to be trusted for the future. Only respect their religious prejudices and keep faith with them, and you ensure fidelity. It is physically impossible that our small islands with their population of 28 millions can afford a perennial supply of troops to keep in subjection 181 millions of people, dispersed over an area of 1,466,576 square miles. * * It is attributed to the Sepoys that they are using the greased cartridges against us, and consequently their objection to them is a subterfuge. The fact is, they have neither the Enfield rifle nor the greased cartridges, but are using ‘Brown Bess’ and the usual musket ammunition. Lastly, the public should know that the original phases of the military revolt have passed away, and that we have now to contend with a Mahommedan conspiracy, ramifying throughout India, and that the Sepoys are merely tools in the hands of our ancient and implacable enemies.”

This was on the 9th of May. On the 10th May the rest of the regiment rose in revolt, broke open the gaol, liberated their comrades and 1,200 felons besides. From that time everything was confusion, and rebellion was enacted from Calcutta to Lahore. A gentleman in this room wrote these words in the *Morning Herald*, of 22nd August, 1856 :—

“Once put forth your hand, and touch what the Asiatic considers the ark of his honour, and you will have precisely what RUSSIA REQUIRES, *scenes like those of the Vellore Mutiny, enacted from Calcutta to Lahore.*”

But the story of infatuation is not yet completed. I must call your attention to the conduct of the Indian Government after the events of Meerut and Delhi. On May 28th—(recollect the expressions of March 5th with regard to the biting of the cartridge, “a mere change of drill, with no appearance of concession to discontented men”)—mark now the conduct of the Indian Government when the Sepoys had risen in revolt. On May 28th, a circular is issued recounting what the Government *had* done to quiet the minds of the Sepoys, when the following information is for the first time given :—

“*An alteration was also made (in March) in the platoon exercise by which the ends of the cartridges were no longer to be placed in the mouth.*”

The circular ends thus :—

“The above information is furnished for the use of officers in command of stations, regiments, or detachments, and they are hereby ordered to circulate it, and make it understood amongst all under their command, officers and men, without delay.

“Every means is to be taken to do this effectually and immediately, both formally on parade, and privately in the quarters of every corps. And commanding officers are hereby directed to spare no pains to make their men, each Sepoy individually, fully aware of its contents.”

There is no talk now of avoiding the appearance of concession to discontented men. A singular fact is revealed in this circular :—

“From communications lately received by the Government, it seems that misapprehension regarding the cartridges is *not confined to the Native troops*. Some officers appear to believe that cartridges of the new kind, or made of unusual materials, have been issued to the army.”

The circular adds :—

“This is quite erroneous. No cartridges for the new musket and no cartridge made of a new kind of paper, have at any time been

issued to *any regiment of the army*, nor is it the intention of Government that any should be issued.”—*Blue Book*, page 340.

After this let me read to you a document of the fatal date of May 4th :—

“*The Adjutant-General of the Army, to the Secretary to the Government of India.*

“Head-Quarters, Simla, May 4, 1857.

“SIR,—Referring to previous correspondence regarding the target practice of the Native detachments at the several rifle depots, the Commander-in-Chief considers it will be satisfactory to the Right Honorable the Governor-General in Council to learn that at all three depots the practice has been commenced, and that the men of all grades have unhesitatingly and cheerfully used the new cartridges.”

Now for the distinction between “The Army” and “Any Regiment of the Army.”

“In communicating this information to his Lordship, I am to beg you will be good enough to add that a confidential circular has been addressed to officers commanding regiments, enjoining upon them to take every precaution in their power to prevent the *depot men*, upon their rejoining *their corps*, being subjected to any taunting or ill-usage from their comrades with reference to *their having used the Enfield rifle cartridges at the depots.*

“I have, &c.

“C. CHESTER, Colonel.”

[*Blue Book*, page 270.]

On May 14th, ten days after, proceeds the following from the same quarter :—

“Adjutant General’s Office, Head Quarters,
Simla, May 14, 1857.

“SIR,—The Commander-in-Chief desires that all firing for drill or target practice purposes shall be suspended until further orders.

“It is to be thoroughly explained to the men, that the sole object of this order is to soothe their minds, now so excited, and also to remove the possibility of their being supposed by their comrades at other stations, or by the people at their homes, to be using any objectionable cartridges.

“I have, &c.

“C. CHESTER, Colonel,

[*Blue Book*, page 44.]

“Adjutant-General of the Army.”

On May 19th, the cartridge is withdrawn altogether, whether greased or ungreased, torn or bitten :—

General Orders by the Commander-in-Chief.

“Head Quarters, Umballah, May 19, 1857.

“The Commander-in-Chief on the 14th of May issued an order, informing the Native army that it had never been the intention of the Government to force them to use any cartridges which could be objected to ; that they never would be, either now or hereafter. His object in *publishing that order was to allay the excitement* which has been raised in their minds, although he felt there was no real cause for

it. He hopes that this may have been the case ; but he still perceives that *the very name of greased cartridges causes agitation*, and he has been informed that some of those Sepoys who entertain the strongest attachment and loyalty to the Government, and are ready at any moment to obey his orders, would still be under the apprehension that their family would not believe that they were not in some way or other contaminated by its use. The rifle introduced into the British army is an improvement upon the old musket, and much more effective ; but it would not be of the same advantage in the hands of the Native army if it was to be used with reluctance. Notwithstanding, therefore, that the Government have affirmed that the cartridges are perfectly harmless, he is satisfied that they would not desire to persist in the use of them if the feelings of the Sepoys can be thereby calmed. His Excellency therefore has determined that the new cartridges shall be discontinued. He announces this to the Native army, in the full confidence that all will now perform their duty free from anxiety and care, and be prepared to stand and shed the last drop of their blood, as they have formerly done, by the side of the British troops, and in defence of their country.”—*Blue Book*, page 357.

The last thing I have to lay before you is an attempt vainly made by the Lieut.-Governor of the North-Western Provinces to save India. Agra, the capital, is between Delhi and Lucknow, and the very centre of the disturbed district. Mr. Colvin, the Lieutenant-Governor, was one of the most eminent and excellent men of the Indian civil service. Since the event I am about to detail he is dead. For good men, in such stations and in such times, there is a peculiar malady—a broken heart :—

“*The Lieutenant-Governor of the North-Western Provinces to the Governor-General of India in Council.*

“(Telegraphic.)

“Agra, May 24. 7 P.M.

“On the mode of dealing with the mutineers, I would strenuously oppose general severity towards all. Such a course would, as *we are unanimously convinced* by a knowledge of the feeling of the people, acquired amongst them from a variety of sources, *estrangle the remainder of the army*. Hope, I am firmly convinced, should be held out to *all those who were not ringleaders or actively concerned in murder and violence*. Many are in the rebels’ ranks because they could not get away ; many certainly thought we were tricking them out of their caste ; and this opinion is held, however unwisely, by the mass of the population, and even by some of the more intelligent classes. Never was delusion more wide or deep. Many of the best soldiers in the army, amongst others of its most faithful section, the Irregular Cavalry, show a marked reluctance to engage in a war against men whom they believe to have been misled on the point of religious honor. A tone of general menace would, I am persuaded, be wrong. The Commander-in-Chief should, in my view, be authorized to act upon the above line of policy ; and when means of escape are thus open to those who can be admitted to mercy, *the remnant will be considered obstinate traitors even by their own countrymen, who will have no hesitation in aiding against them*. I request the earliest answer to this message. The subject is of vital and pressing importance.”—*Blue Book*, page 331.

On May 25th he issued the following proclamation:—

“Soldiers engaged in the late disturbances who are desirous of going to their own homes, and who give up their arms at the nearest Government civil or military post, and retire quietly, shall be permitted to do so unmolested.

“*Many faithful soldiers have been driven into resistance to Government only because they were in the ranks and could not escape from them, and because they really thought their feelings of religion and honor injured by the measures of Government.* This feeling was wholly a mistake, but it acted on men’s minds. A proclamation of the Governor-General now issued is perfectly explicit and will remove all doubts on these points. Every evil-minded instigator in the disturbance, and those guilty of heinous crimes against private persons, shall be punished. All those who appear in arms against the Government, after this notification is known, shall be treated as open enemies.”
—*Blue Book*, page 332.

This proclamation was immediately disavowed by Lord Canning, and Mr. Colvin’s anticipations realized.

I have to thank you for the attention which you have given to these weary details. I dared not have stated that the mutiny of the Bengal army had been caused by these cartridges, unless I adduced the evidence. Is it not astonishing that you should come here in the month of November to hear these facts from me? In the month of July all this was laid before Parliament. I have only given you a portion of the evidence; every part of it is to the same effect. It stares at you from every page of these volumes—“the cartridge, the cartridge, the cartridge,” the cry of the dying Sepoy!* There are 650 members in the House of Commons; there is a House of Lords, and a Press, the instructor of the country. Mr. Disraeli assured the House of Commons the rise and fall of empires was not an affair of greased cartridges—drawing men’s minds away from the contemplation of the truth in the outset. The Duke of Cambridge, at Sheffield, the other day said that “70,000 men had mutinied nobody knew why;” Lord Shaftesbury more recently has said, these men had no wrong to complain of, and put forward none. You have read the report of the public meeting in Newcastle, as well as of the speeches of the members of parliament there, and of statesmen from end to end of the kingdom, and yet not a word of the case, as set forth in the official documents, have they acquainted you with.†

* Orders were given to interrogate the wounded at Delhi as to the cause of mutiny, the universal answer was “the cartridge, the cartridge, the cartridge.” It was stated in the *Times* that the Sepoys killed all of their own number who were wounded with the Enfield cartridge.

† Colonel Sykes and General Thompson are the only exceptions.

I do not say that there are not other causes of disaffection in India. There are other grievances which have turned men's minds against us; but *this* mutiny we would not have had but for the greased cartridges. (*Applause*). Is it not dreadful to think that a large portion of the world should be plunged into bloodshed, misery, and ruin from such a cause? Can "perverse management" equal this in any page of the history of the world? I know of none like it! To think that the carrying out of a point of discipline (of no consequence whatever to us) should have shaken this empire! I declare that, as an Englishman, I am ready to sink into the ground with shame when I think of these things. (*Applause*). But the more shame do I feel that my countrymen should be ignorant of them. There is a conspiracy to prevent you knowing the truth. The government has the London Press in its hands, with few exceptions. The English people, instead of inquiring themselves, trust to it, not suspecting that it may be worked by men whose object is to deceive them. Thus it becomes possible that these documents may be published and people know nothing about them. The *Times* can publish in one column the letter of Colonel Sykes, explaining the thing so clearly that there can be no misapprehending it, and in another column a leading article telling the people that the Sepoys had no cause of complaint, knowing perfectly well that the anonymous article would be believed, and the authenticated statement of Col. Sykes disregarded. (*Hear, hear*). Some time ago, in London, I saw an extraordinary machine. It was a talking machine. It had the form of a man, and lips that moved. The inventor sat behind a screen and played on notes like a piano. The machine spoke four languages, and sung songs. It is the type of the Englishman of the present day, with the finger of the *Times* behind him, playing on his organs. These things could not have been possible but for the cry "Don't enquire." We are told not to enquire till the proper time has come. When the "proper" time does come, all that will be necessary will be to sacrifice the East India Company. The people will be made to believe they are discharging their duty by abolishing the East India Company. Now, upon that point they are as much misled as they are with regard to the cause of the mutiny. It would take another lecture to go into this folly. Since the institution of the Board of Control by Mr. Pitt, the governing power has not been in the hands of the East India Company, but of the Board of

Control, which is simply an *alias* for Prime Minister. The really responsible parties are the Board of Control,—in point of fact, the government of England. These men having accepted these acts, have become responsible for them. I have no hope that anything I can say will have any effect on the course of affairs in India. I only hope that it may awaken some of you to a sense of your duties. For these things there can be no remedy, save by the old-fashioned process of impeachment. When anything wrong is done, it is always said you must change the system. If I found my cashier robbing me, and I were to believe the mischief would be remedied by changing the system, how long do you think I should be in getting into the *Gazette*? A man of business dismisses or prosecutes a faithless clerk. Why not pursue the same course in the affairs of the nation? Because, being slaves in heart, you cannot realize to yourselves that you are the principals, and the Prime Minister and Government your servants. You bow down before the Minister as the Hindoo bows down before Juggernaut. A nation that cannot understand that its duty and its safety require that a clear case of delinquency on the part of its servants, whether that delinquency arises from gross incapacity, wilful neglect, or treachery, should be met with retribution on the heads of the offenders, has ceased to be a community of men.

P O S T S C R I P T .

Since delivering this Lecture I have obtained that information as to the circumstances of the outbreak at Meerut which is not given in the official documents.

The substance of it is, that the Sepoys were not themselves alarmed about the cartridges—but begged that the issue of them might be *temporarily* deferred, on the ground that the intensity of the religious panic, prevailing at that time throughout Bengal, would subject them to contumely, and expose them to the danger of loss of caste, in case they were known to have used them *in any way*. It was *not* attempted to enforce the biting at Meerut, as in the case of Lucknow, but the perfect truth of the statement of the Sepoys is attested by General Anson's own order of May 19th; "the very *name* of greased cartridges causes agitation."

The mutiny at Meerut was the direct consequence of his order of May 4th, issued with perfect knowledge of the existence of that state of things, as will be seen on referring back to it.

General Anson was informed from Meerut, by *Company's officers*, that mutiny would probably follow the attempt to enforce that order. The men having in vain begged for time to be given, to allow agitation to subside, refused to receive the cartridges. They were tried by court martial, and their petition for delay was put in evidence. All who had served above three years were condemned to ten years' imprisonment; all who had served less, to five years. The irons were fixed upon them at a parade of the troops, three hours being occupied by the process, and they were then marched to gaol.

General Anson, the Commander-in-Chief, was in the Royal Army, as was also his subordinate in command at Meerut.

